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ART NEWS FROM ENGLAND.—No. 5.

To the Editors of the Crayon :

LONDON, July 23, 1855.

THE London Art season, like the long summer daylight, is rapidly waning. Old exhibitions are closing, and no new ones opening. Few or none will survive the first days of August. Criticism slumbers: Art news reduces itself to scraps and gossip.

Ruskin's pamphlet on the Royal Academy pictures, has galloped already into its third edition. This is signalized by the addition of a postscript, in which two or three paintings previously unreviewed obtain notice, and two or three critics, previously unlashd, are brought to the cart's-tail. A feeble being (writing in the *Globe*, I think), who had tried to convict Ruskin out of his own mouth, or to delude an ignorant public into supposing he had done so, which is quite triumph enough for critics of his stamp, is "written down an ass" in the neatest style of penmanship; and Mr. Leslie, with handsome recognition of his distinguished excellence as a painter of social manners, is warned of the fall he is to get for travelling beyond his tether into the regions of high criticism. The juiciest thing in the postscript, however, is the remark, that the worst that any one can do for a painter censured by Ruskin, is to attempt to controvert any of that writer's strictures. There is a delicious calmness of arrogance in this, which, justified as it is by the fact, and by Ruskin's unexampled knowledge and faculty in Art-criticism, one can applaud for its truth, as well as enjoy for what, in London slang, is called its "cheek." I observe, also, that a second edition of the "Seven Lamps of Architecture" is announced, "with a new set of plates," which I have not seen as yet, but which can hardly be better, though possibly more sightly, than the old ones.

Of the two testimonials of which I wrote you last month, to the artist Cox, and the reviewer, S. C. Hall, I hear that the former is progressing satisfactorily, and that the decorative manufacturers, as well as the artists, are joining the movement for the latter. May the first be worthy of the man whom the subscribers honor themselves by honoring, and the second of the contributors' views of the "eminent services" rendered by him for whom it is destined!

A brace of names appears in our Art obituary. Mr. Edward Williams, a landscape painter, much addicted to moonlights and gipseys, which he portrayed rather with facility and knack, than with force, has died in his 74th year. Apart from his own performances, he was noticeable as the patriarch of a whole tribe of painters—so numerous, and so much akin in style, that many of them have had to seek a distinctive position by change of name. Four or five retain the name of Williams; others figure as Arthur, Gilbert, Sidney, Percy, and Boddington, senior and junior. Of Boddington I have observed mention in the pages of *THE CRAYON*, which, though resented by some champion of the Britishers in your country, expresses an estimate of the artist's position that would not be

deemed ill-naturedly depreciative here—clever as he undoubtedly is. The second death is that of Mr. Brocky, a painter chiefly of nude or semi-nude studies of the living model, under classic or fancy names. He was a man of skill, but apparently without invention or elevation. Some water-colors which he exhibited this year, appeared to me to indicate a new and fresher direction of his ability—decreed to be cut short at once.

The exhibition of works of Art in aid of the patriotic fund for our army, after losing, as I hear, some £1,000 in the bankruptcy of a banking firm, whose misdeeds are among the foremost topics of the day, has come to a close. Spite of this loss, its career has been brilliantly successful. About 600 works which remained unsold have since been disposed of by auction, including the best thing in the collection, Mr. Arthur Hughes' "Return of a Soldier to his Wife and Child." Such are the perverse chances where genius co-operates with fashion, and submits its work to a crowd of sight-seers, who have eyes for little beyond the great social name signed at the corner of some weakling experiment of the brush. At another sale has figured a loudly-puffed "Adam and Eve," by a Belgian painter, Van Leries, which no puff availed to sell in its own exhibition-room, together with a Turner of distinction named "Rough Weather—a Man Overboard." I was not personally acquainted with the work until I saw it in the sale-room, where the crowd of Jews and others, who were bidding for a collection of crockery and cabinet-work, prevented me from getting to view the picture from the distance its treatment demands; but there is no doubt of its being a fine specimen of his later (not latest) style. A third sale has been that of a series of water-color paintings and sketches by the extraordinary J. F. Lewis, celebrated by Ruskin, and admired wherever subtle vigor of perception and exquisite Art are appreciated.

A renowned and even phenomenal visitor is here in London now, Rosa Bonheur, the great French animal painter. She has come over with one of her principal works—a Horse Fair—to be added to the attractions of our exhibition of French pictures. English artists are making haste to do her honor, as well they may. I should like to see the question fully and intelligently discussed of what likelihood there is that women should compete in the fine arts with men. As far as I know, Rosa Bonheur is the only woman that has ever publicly deserved, or with the discriminating has established, a reputation of the first-class in painting. Louis Philippe's daughter did a beautiful thing in sculpture—the Joan of Arc. Talent, and even genius, is to be discerned among some ladies of the present generation. The great problem of finding fitting employment for educated women may be expected to rouse and deepen the capabilities of many others; and indeed so long as art, which engages the lives of many of the best heads among the men of every age, is regarded as merely the amusement of its women, the question remains untried. One may hope to live to see it placed on quite a different footing—whether decided in favor of the gentle sex or not. A female Fra Angelico, for anything I can see, should surely not be a *husus natura*.

Meanwhile, according to what one hears of her manly energy and thoroughness of study, the example of Rosa Bonheur seems, while pointing out one great cause of her own success, to indicate by contrast that of the short-coming of so many others.

The British jurors of the Paris exhibition have shown themselves more truly patriotic than if, with weak tenacity, they had clung to our own display of 1851, as the *ne plus ultra*. A circular recently promulgated by them affirms, "that it is desirable an early intimation should be given to the British public of the great excellence of the exhibition, and of its marked advance in the objects exhibited over that of 1851," and that it is eminently worthy of the attention of artists, of manufacturers and their workmen, and of all classes in the United Kingdom." The practical headship in the arrangement of our own contributions to Paris, is vested in Mr. Henry Cole, the reputed originator of the exhibition of 1851, and chief officer of the art-section of our government Department of Science and Art. That Department has been brought into a condition not unhopeful for the future. Last year, a very satisfactory result was elicited from the experiment of giving the students a particular flower (I think the wood-anemone) to be inventively applied for decorative design, and this year praise is earned by a similar application of the flowers of the woody night-shade.

I see it stated that the principal prizeholder of the Art Union at the last lottery, has purchased a picture by Mr. Sant, named "The Fortune-Teller," which will consequently find its way to America. The choice is anything but a happy one. Mr. Sant is a clever man of the second or third class, and the picture is a coarse, unmeaning, conventional specimen of his skill. It will do English art no credit in your country; or perhaps I should rather say, *ought* to do it no credit; for, like all the artist's productions, it is popular enough here, and may be equally so across the Atlantic.

The month's chief contribution to the literature of art is a book on Phrenology in its Connection with the Fine Arts, by George Combe. The author points out the phrenological requisites for appreciating art, and the phrenological truths (if truths they be, on which I do not venture any expression of opinion) to be embodied by the artist, citing examples of good and ill success in this point. The work is individual and well written, and keeps the attention alive.

WM. M. ROSETTI.

THE foundation of the connoisseurs' preference for the Dutch masters is exceedingly slender; it is the painter who, in reality, enjoys and admires their works; whose reputation (which induces the connoisseur to purchase them) is derived from the painter's appreciation of their technical merits. Most of the Dutch pictures are composed of subjects gross, vulgar, and filthy; and where this is not the case with the subjects, the characters introduced are such as degrade the human species below the level of the brute creation. As a proof of the correctness of this statement, let any one put the employments of most of the figures into words, and see whether the description would be tolerated in any decent society. And further, is the selection of scenery in these works remarkable (or is it not the reverse) for any of those features which delight either in Nature or Poetry?—*Life of Collins*.